

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1 1. (original) A method for producing a nonwoven
2 fabric, in which a mat of filaments or of fibers which is in
3 displacement, said filaments or fibers being composed of an
4 organic material, is compacted in the direction of thickness
5 at a point on its path of displacement, and the compacted
6 mat is then consolidated into a consolidated mat, downstream
7 at a consolidation station, characterized in that the
8 displacement speed of the mat is reduced at the very point
9 on its path of displacement where it is compacted.

1 2. (original) The method as claimed in claim 1,
2 characterized in that the displacement speed of the mat is
3 reduced by 5 to 50%.

1 3. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim
2 1 ~~or 2~~, characterized in that the thickness of the mat at
3 compacting is reduced from 99% to 30%.

1 4. (currently amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of~~

2 ~~claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, characterized in that the mat is
3 wetted at compacting or just downstream of compacting.

1 5. (currently amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of~~
2 ~~claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1, characterized in that the mat is
3 consolidated by causing it to pass through the consolidation
4 station at the reduced speed.

1 6. (currently amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of~~
2 ~~claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, characterized in that the mat is
3 consolidated by hydraulic entanglement, by thermal binding,
4 by chemical binding and/or by mechanical needling.

1 7. (currently amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of~~
2 ~~claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1, characterized in that the mat is a
3 mat of filaments coming from a machine in hot-melt operation
4 or a mat of fibers coming from a card for nonwoven fabrics
5 or from a machine operating by air, known as air-laid
6 operation.

1 8. (currently amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of~~
2 ~~claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1, characterized in that the mat is
3 maintained by applying a vacuum to it between the point
4 where it is compacted and the consolidation station.

1 9. (currently amended) A machine for producing a
2 nonwoven fabric, comprising a first element ~~(1)~~ for
3 delivering a mat to means ~~(7)~~ intended for compacting it in
4 the direction of thickness, characterized in that said means
5 ~~(7, 8)~~ are also means intended for reducing the displacement
6 speed of the mat at the point where it is compacted.

1 10. (currently amended) The machine as claimed in
2 claim 9, characterized in that the compacting and speed
3 reduction means are implemented by the formation of a
4 nipping point between the first element ~~(7)~~ and another
5 moveable element ~~(8)~~ having a linear speed lower than that
6 of the first element.

1 11. (original) The machine as claimed in claim 10,
2 characterized in that the other moveable element is a
3 conveyor or a second cylinder.

1 12. (currently amended) The machine as claimed in ~~one~~
2 ~~of claims 9 to 11~~ claim 9, characterized by means ~~(9)~~
3 intended for wetting the mat when it is being compacted or
4 when it has just been compacted.

1 13. (currently amended) The machine as claimed in ~~one~~
2 ~~of claims 9 to 12~~ claim 9, characterized by means ~~(10)~~ for

3 consolidating the mat, which are arranged downstream of the
4 compacting means in the direction of displacement of the
5 mat.

1 14. (original) The machine as claimed in claim 13,
2 characterized in that the consolidation means are arranged
3 so as to consolidate the mat when it passes over the other
4 moveable element.

1 15. (currently amended) The machine as claimed in
2 ~~either one of claims 13 and 14~~ claim 13, characterized by
3 means of maintaining the mat between the compacting means
4 and the consolidation means by a vacuum.

1 16. (currently amended) The use of a method or of a
2 machine as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, for
3 reducing the ratio of a property of a nonwoven fabric in the
4 length direction to this property in the breadth direction.